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R 021240Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8863
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS
SUBJECT: END USE OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT PURCHASED UNDER FMS CREDITS

REF: STATE 015151 (NOTAL)

1. THIS EMBASSY IS AWARE OF HOW EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED UNDER THE FMS PROGRAM IS BEING USED AND WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO DIVERSION OF EQUIPMENT TO UNAUTHORIZED OR UNFORESEEN USES. TO RESPOND TO DEPARTMENT'S QUESTIONS, WE WILL ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS OF THE TIME FRAME, THE SPECIFIC ITEMS DELIVERED, AND MAKE SOME GENERAL COMMENTS FOR PERSPECTIVE. VIRTUALLY NONE OF THE ITEMS PURCHASED WITH FY-75 OR FY-76 CREDITS HAVE ARRIVED IN COUNTRY DUE TO LONG PROCUREMENT AND DELIVERY TIMES. THIS RESPONSE THEREFORE DISCUSSES HOW A VARIETY OF MAJOR END ITEMS SUPPLIED IN PAST YEARS ARE BEING USED. (AS OF JANUARY 1977 ONLY 8.5 PERCENT OF TOTAL FY-76 CREDITS HAD BEEN OBLIGATED. ACTUAL DELIVERY DURING FY-75 AND 76 MAY CONSIST OF ITEMS PURCHASED UNDER CREDITS AS FAR BACK AS 1969).

2. IN LOOKING AT MATERIEL SUPPLIED UNDER FMS CREDITS, IT SHOULD FIRST BE NOTED THAT SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
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HAS IN PAST BEEN DEVOTED TO PURCHASE OF CONSUMABLES, EG, SPARES AND AMMUNITION, AND NOT TO MAJOR END ITEMS. OF THE MAJOR ITEMS, PAST PROGRAMS HAVE FINANCED SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS OF ENGINEERING EQUIPMENT, BAILEY BRIDGES, ROAD BUILDING EQUIPMENT, 5

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TON TRUCKS, AND METAL MATS FOR LANDING STRIPS. THIS EMBASSY IS ENTIRELY CONFIDENT IT KNOWS WHERE MAJOR END ITEMS OF WEAPON SYSTEMS, SUCH AS VESSELS, F-86'S, A4B'S AND A4C'SN APC'S AND AMTRAKS ARE LOCATED AND HOW THEY ARE BEING USED.

3. TO PROVIDE PERSPECTIVE TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN REFTTEL, IT SHOULD FIRST BE OBSERVED THAT ARGENTINA HAS A SUBSTANTIAL WEAPONS INDUSTRY OF ITS OWN. IT EXPORTS SPORTING WEAPONS; EG, TO SEARS ROEBUCK IN THE UNITED STATES, THERE IS LOCAL PRODUCTION OF A WIDE RANGE OF WEAPONS UP TO AND INCLUDING HEAVY AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, ROCKETS AND MORTARS (MAJOR ITEMS OF ARTILLERY ARE ALL ITALIAN-SUPPLIED); ARGENTINA PRODUCES EVEN COIN AIRCRAFT, AND HAS A RELATIVELY ADVANCED ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY PRODUCING MICRO-CIRCUITS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT OF THAT DEGREE OF SOPHISTICATION, IN ADDITION TO TACTICAL RADIOS. US-SUPPLIED WEAPONRY IS IN MOST CASES MARGINAL TO TOTAL ARGENTINE SUPPLIES.

4. ARGENTINE MILITARY FORCES, WITH CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS, NOTED BELOW, HAVE BEEN USED CONVENTIONALLY IN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN TUCUMAN PROVINCE TO COMBAT MAIN-FORCE GUERRILLA UNITS. THE GUERRILLAS IN TUCUMAN WERE ARMED AND ORGANIZED AS UNITS OF THE PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMY (ERP), THE MILITARY ARM OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY (PRT), A MARXIST ORGANIZATION. THIS TYPE OF CONVENTIONAL COMBAT OPERATION HAS NOW VIRTUALLY CEASED AS ERP/MONTERO FORCES HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN FIXED BATTLE AGAINST THE ARGENTINE ARMED SERVICES, AND AT PRESENT ARE LIMITING THEIR ACTIVITIES TO TERRORIST ACTS OF SHOOTING AND BOMBING.

5. THE ARGENTINE MILITARY SERVICES REGARD THEMSELVES AS INVOLVED IN A WAR TO SAVE THE NATION, AND PUBLICIZE AND TAKE PRIDE IN SUCCESSFUL OPEN MILITARY ACTIONS AGAINST TERRORIST CONFRONTATIONS

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OF MILITARY UNITS IN COMBAT. THE ARMED FORCES DO NOT WISH TO BE PERCEIVED AS A REPRESSIVE FORCE BY THE PUBLIC AND AVOID IDENTIFICATION WITH CERTAIN COUNTERSUBVERSION OPERATIONS IN URBAN AREAS WHICH ARE PERFORMED BY ARMED INDIVIDUALS IN CIVILIAN CLOTHING.

6. IN REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT MENTIONED IN REFTTEL THE FOLLOWING IS SUBMITTED:

A. U.S. SUPPLIED HELICOPTERS HAVE BEEN USED TO TRANSPORT TROOPS AND VIPs, AS COMMAND AND CONTROL VEHICLES, AND FOR MEDICAL EVACUATION DURING ACTIONS AGAINST MAIN-FORCE GUERRILLA UNITS ENGAGED IN COMBAT WITH GOVERNMENT FORCES IN THE JUNGLE AREAS OF

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TUCUMAN. DURING AN ATTACK ON THE ARMY'S MONTE CHINGOLO ARSENAL NEAR BUENOS AIRES IN DECEMBER 1975 BY A GUERRILLA FORCE REPORTED TO BE 133 GUERRILLAS IN THE STRENGTH WITH 100 TO 150 MORE PARTICIPATING IN COORDINATED SUPPORTING AND DIVERSIONARY ATTACKS, HELICOPTERS WERE UTILIZED FOR ILLUMINATION, TO TRANSPORT TROOPS OVER BLOCKED BRIDGES, MEDEVAC AND COMMAND AND CONTROL. WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT SUCH HELICOPTERS HAVE BEEN USED IN AN ARMED COMBAT ROLE. THE U.S. HAS PROVIDED NO ARMAMENT FOR HELICOPTERS.

B. COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT: THE MAJORITY OF COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT PROVIDED AAF IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN LONG RANGE EQUIPMENT FOR FIXED OR SEMI-FIXED SITES, MORE APPLICABLE TO ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS. THE GOA IS NOW PRODUCING THEIR OWN SMALL UNIT TACTICAL RADIOS, THOSE USED AT SQUAD, COMPANY, BATTALION LEVEL. THOSE TACTICAL RADIOS PROVIDED IN EARLIER YEARS ARE ISSUED TO REGULAR MILITARY UNITS (INFANTRY, ARMOR, ARTILLERY) THROUGHOUT THE ARMY AND MARINES.

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C. ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS WERE UTILIZED BY THE AA IN DEFENSE OF MONTE CHINGOLO ARSENAL DURING THE ATTACK IN DECEMBER 1975. DURING THE MINI-COUP WHEN AN AF GENERAL ATTEMPTED TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT IN 1975 AND AGAIN DURING THE MILITARY TAKEOVER IN MARCH 1976 APCs WERE POSITIONED IN KEY AREAS AS

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A SHOW OF FORCE. SOME APCS HAVE BEEN USED FOR TROOP TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILE COMMAND AND CONTROL VEHICLES DURING SEARCH/CIVIC ACTION OPERATIONS. SUCH SEARCH/CIVIC ACTION OPERATIONS ARE CHARACTERIZED BY PLACING A CORDON ON AN AREA, EXAMINATION OF IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS OF INHABITANTS TO CHECK FOR TERRORISTS OR ILLEGAL ALIENS, PROVIDING PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS, INNOCULATIONS AND OTHER MEDICAL TREATMENT, PICKING UP STRAY AND POSSIBLY RABID ANIMALS, REPAIR OF UTILITY SYSTEMS, INSTITUTION OF RODENT CONTROL MEASURES, AND GENERAL CLEAN-UP OF THE AREA (TO INCLUDE PAINTING WALLS TO REMOVE POLITICAL SLOGANS). PERSONS NOT PERMITTED TO GO TO THEIR JOBS DURING SUCH OPERATIONS ARE GIVEN OFFICIAL LETTERS TO PRESENT TO THEIR EMPLOYERS EXPLAINING THEIR ABSENCE AND ADVISING THE EMPLOYER TO PAY THE INDIVIDUAL FOR THE TIME LOST. SOME OF THESE OPERATIONS WERE FILMED FOR U.S. TELEVISION IN THE NOV/DEC 76 TIMEFRAME. WE HAVE NO RECORD OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES OR HARASSMENT BY USE OF APCS.

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D. RIVER PATROL CRAFT ARE ASSIGNED TO THE PREFECTURA (THE ARGENTINE COAST GUARD) AND ARE INVOLVED IN BORDER CONTROL ACTIVITIES, ANTI-CONTRABAND, ANTI-SMUGGLING. AT PRESENT THEY ARE BEING USED IN EVACUATING PEOPLE FROM FLOODED AREAS OR AREAS ABOUT TO BE FLOODED. PRESUMABLY THEY COULD BE EMPLOYED TO COUNTER INFILTRATION OR EXFILTRATION BY GUERRILLA GROUPS, BUT WE KNOW OF NO SUCH SPECIFIC APPLICATION. THEY HAVE CONDUCTED TRAINING EXERCISES IN CONJUNCTION WITH SIMILAR FORCES OF NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ALONG THESE LINES.

7. THE EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON ANY SPECIFIC QUESTION RELATING TO PARTICULAR END ITEMS WHICH INTERESTED PARTIES MAY RAISE WITH THE DEPARTMENT. WE BELIEVE THAT, IN THE CASE OF ARGENTINA AT LEAST, WE ARE IN A POSITION TO ASSURE INQUIRERS HOW MAJOR END ITEMS FINANCED UNDER FMS CREDITS ARE BEING UTILIZED.

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